United Nations A/61/PV.38

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

Official Records

38th plenary meeting
Friday, 20 October 2006, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

Second report of the General Committee (A/61/250/Add.1)

The President: In paragraph 1 (a) of its report (A/61/250/Add.1), the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that an additional item, entitled "Commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade", be included in the agenda of the current session under heading I, "Organizational, administrative and other matter".

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this item in the agenda of the current session under heading I?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 1 (b), the General Committee further recommends that the item be considered directly in plenary meeting.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to consider this item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: I should like to inform members that the item entitled "Commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade" becomes item 155 on the agenda of the current session.

In paragraph 2 (a) of the same report, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that an additional item, entitled "Extension of the terms of the ad litem judges of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994", be included in the agenda of the current session under heading I, "Organizational, administrative and other matters".

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this item in the agenda of the current session under heading I?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 2 (b), the General Committee further recommends that the item be considered directly in plenary meeting.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to consider the item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: I should like to inform members that the item entitled "Extension of the terms of the ad litem judges of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide

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and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994" becomes item 156 on the agenda of the current session.

The General Assembly has thus concluded the consideration of the second report of the General Committee.

Before proceeding further, I would like to make an announcement concerning agenda item 105 (c) on the election of the members of the United Nations International Law Commission, which has been scheduled to take place on Thursday 16 November 2006. In order to facilitate the election, and in accordance with the established practice, the General Assembly will take an advance decision on the matter of requesting the Secretariat to issue a consolidated list of candidates reflecting all submissions and changes received so far. It is my intention to consult the Assembly in this regard on Thursday afternoon, 22 October 2006.

Agenda item 108

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

(a) Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(b) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256/Add.1)

Draft resolution (A/61/L.5)

(c) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(d) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

Draft resolution (A/61/L.4)

(e) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(f) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(g) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(h) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(i) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(j) Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

Draft resolution (A/61/L.7)

(k) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

Draft resolution (A/61/L.6)

(l) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256/Add.1)

(m) Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(n) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/61/185)

(o) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(p) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(q) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(r) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(s) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/61/184)

(t) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

The President: I give the floor to the Executive-Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, Mr. Tibor Tóth, to present the report of the Preparatory Commission.

Mr. Tóth (Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization): I am pleased to report on the activities of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO). The promise of this Treaty, as one of the cornerstones of the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime, is the total ban of any nuclear explosion in any environment. My address to the General Assembly coincides, however, with a disquieting situation that is a strong reminder of the importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

The announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it had conducted a nuclear test on 9 October 2006 resulted in global expressions of concern and condemnation with regard to this irresponsible act. Such a strong reaction of the international community is important and encouraging. It demonstrates how much the international community cares about the nuclear test ban.

On the occasion of a special session of the Preparatory Commission on 13 October 2006, the States signatories to the CTBT expressed their deep concern and regret over the test. I share those sentiments. Such an action goes against the letter and spirit of the CTBT, which I continue to hope the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will sign and ratify. The support demonstrated for the Treaty highlights the commitment of the international community to establish a universal and verifiable comprehensive nuclear test ban.

The announcement not only meant that the global moratorium on nuclear tests, which had been observed since 1998, was presumably broken, it also put our organization in the very sharp focus of attention. It was a test for our organization, our technical capabilities, our own procedures and the potential value that our global verification system can bring to States signatories. In the special session, States signatories expressed appreciation for the speedy provision of reliable and valuable data by the CTBTO's Provisional Technical Secretariat. As regrettable and disquieting as this new situation may appear, it is my hope that it will serve to refocus the attention of the international community on the relevance of the CTBT as a key disarmament and non-proliferation instrument and to underscore the urgency of bringing the Treaty into force and to complete work on the CTBT verification system.

The main activities of the Preparatory Commission and its Provisional Technical Secretariat over the past 10 years have been the promotion of the entry into force and establishment of the verification regime stipulated by the CTBT. There is significant progress to report concerning both.

To date, the Treaty has been signed by 176 States, 135 of which have already ratified it. The ratifying States include 34 of the 44 States whose ratification is required for the Treaty to enter into force. Since the CTBTO's last report to the General Assembly, two years ago, three States have signed and 16 States have ratified the Treaty.

In September 2005, 117 States participated in the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, with 40 States being represented by their ministers or deputy ministers. The meeting was successful in producing a robust final declaration in which the ratifying States agreed that they would spare no efforts and use all avenues open to them to encourage further signature and ratification of the Treaty. This was followed on 20 September 2006 by a ministerial meeting in support of the CTBT, in which representatives of 61 States, including 22 ministers and deputy ministers, participated. The joint ministerial statement, which was welcomed by the Secretary-General, reaffirmed full support for the objectives of the CTBT and the work of the Commission. I would like to express my thanks for these and the many other initiatives in support of the Treaty.

The Provisional Technical Secretariat was mandated to establish an international monitoring system consisting of 321 monitoring stations using four technologies. Seismic, infrasound and hydro-acoustic stations are registering energy propagated through the earth, through the atmosphere and through the oceans. Radionuclide technology allows the analysis of radioactive particles filtered from air samples. Half of the radionuclide monitoring stations will also register minute quantities of noble gases present in the atmosphere.

The geographical distribution of the stations allows for complete global coverage by the system and, if I may add, includes some rather difficult locations for building and operating these stations.

It is the combination of these four technologies that should ultimately allow member States of the CTBT to make an informed judgement about events registered by our system. To date, nearly 190 stations are already providing data through the Global Communication Infrastructure to the International Data Centre, distributing data products to 780 institutions in 93 States signatories.

The CTBT verification technologies have the potential to offer important additional benefits derived from data from our monitoring stations and the activities of the International Data Centre. Our data can be used in a variety of fields, including studies of the earth's structure as well as for research on earthquakes, volcanic eruption forecasting, underwater explosion location, and sea temperature and climate change monitoring. During the past year, the Preparatory Commission has continued to discuss the potential contribution of data from the International Monitoring System, in particular in the context of tsunami warning. I am confident that the Preparatory Commission will soon approve a mandate to provide tsunami-warning organizations with relevant data on a continuous and real time basis. While we are mindful of the primary purpose of our verification regime, we hope to be able to further develop these important synergies between the CTBTO's unique capabilities and the scientific community for the benefit of all.

I wish now to highlight the participatory approach of our activities. Altogether, 90 countries are hosting our monitoring system stations, thus contributing to our verification capabilities. The benefits are shared by all, since data are made available to everyone in real time. The Preparatory Commission provides hardware and software, coupled with intensive capacity-building efforts, with the aim of further enhancing the ability of States signatories to make the utmost use of this unprecedented participatory data-sharing arrangement.

The Preparatory Commission continues to organize training programmes and workshops to support the enhancement of the national capabilities of States. These include training courses for station operators and managers and technical staff of National Data Centres, on data analysis, storage and management, the global communications infrastructure and technologies for use in on-site inspections. In the field of international cooperation, the Provisional Technical Secretariat continues its role as an information clearing house and provides support for the advancement of the Commission's work. These extensive outreach activities increase support for and participation in the work of the Commission, as well as serve to advance national implementation of the Treaty.

Following the adoption on 15 June 2000 by the General Assembly of the Agreement to Regulate the Relationship between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, our relations and interactions with the United Nations and its programmes, funds and specialized agencies have intensified. Cooperation with the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs, including the three Regional Centres, is of particular importance to

the Commission. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Department for its dedicated work.

The service agreement that the Commission concluded with the United Nations Development Programme provides us with operational support. The World Meteorological Organization is receiving data from the monitoring system for research purposes. Potential fields of cooperation are being explored with other organizations of the United Nations system. I would also like to highlight the growing cooperation with UNESCO in relation to our provision of data for tsunami warning purposes.

In order to contribute fully to the work of the United Nations family, the Preparatory Commission has requested full membership in the United Nations system's Chief Executives Board. That would not only allow for strengthened cooperation and synergies, but would also provide that body with essential expertise in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

I would like to close with a personal remark. The raison d'être of the CTBT is to establish a legally binding norm against nuclear testing and to set up a credible system to verify compliance with that norm. Verification of international disarmament and non-proliferation agreements is always difficult, slow and costly. But, at the same time, it is an important and worthwhile enterprise. I would like to thank all States that are supporting, in technical, financial and political terms, the development of our verification system. We will continue to do our utmost to live up to the high expectations with regard to our monitoring capabilities.

Ultimately, however, all our work — in particular, the sophisticated verification regime — will prove its worth only after the CTBT has entered into force. It is up to those States listed in Annex 2 to the CTBT — whose ratification is necessary for its entry into force — to consider the Treaty's value in terms of both their national security and international security. The reliable performance of the verification regime and the example of a growing number of ratifiers will, I hope, help them to reach a positive decision.

The President: I now call on Mr. Rogelio Pfirter, Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, to present the report of the organization.

Mr. Pfirter (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons): Please accept my congratulations and best wishes, Madam, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I should also like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his unanimous election as the next Secretary-General of the United Nations. Mr. Ban has demonstrated a strong personal commitment to supporting both the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). I therefore look forward to future cooperation with him in promoting peace and security, which are goals shared by the United Nations and the OPCW.

Just a little more than a week ago in the First Committee, I gave a detailed description of the present activities of the OPCW and underscored the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and my organization. Furthermore, as has been pointed out, the annual report of the OPCW's activities and programmes on the implementation of the CWC in 2004 and the draft report for 2005 have already been circulated. Today, I will summarize those aspects and explain some of the challenges that we face in implementing the Convention.

Let me begin by presenting an overview of the current situation. The disarmament and non-proliferation regime established by the Convention continues to grow in strength. The OPCW now boasts a membership of 180 countries or States parties to the Convention, which is equivalent to more than 90 per cent of the world's population. More than 2,600 inspections have been carried out by OPCW inspection teams at more than 1,000 sites in 76 countries. Nearly 85 per cent of the inspection resources are used to verify the destruction of chemical weapons, which in many cases is carried out 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Today, 15,094 metric tons of Category 1 and 2 chemical weapons have been certified by the OPCW as destroyed. That represents 21 per cent of the declared stockpiles worldwide. In addition, 12 destruction facilities are operating around the world, 10 of them continuously. More facilities will begin operations in the next three years.

Six destruction facilities are operating in the United States of America, and more than 37 per cent of its stockpile has already been destroyed.

The pace of chemical disarmament in the Russian Federation — which initially was rather slow — has now picked up significantly. The country has destroyed more than 6 per cent of its declared chemical stockpile. The remaining Russian stockpile of just over 39,000 metric tons of chemical warfare agents is scheduled to be destroyed by 2012. The authorities in the Russian Federation have been very clear in their pledge to fulfil their obligations under the Convention within the time frame and in the manner mandated by the CWC. I welcome that resolve and encourage further international financial support for the Russian destruction programme, whose completion will benefit not just the Russian Federation, but the world as a whole.

For its part, India has eliminated more than 67 per cent of its declared stockpile at a sustained pace. Another State party has irreversibly disposed of more than 83 per cent of its chemical weapons. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, having destroyed its entire stockpile of Category 3 chemical weapons, has started destroying its Category 2 chemical weapons. The elimination of its entire stockpile is set to be completed by 2010. Albania is due to start destroying its chemical weapons later this year and is expected to complete the destruction of its entire stockpile by the end of April 2007.

Given the large quantity of toxic agents, the high cost and the human and environmental considerations involved, the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles has, in certain cases, proved to be very challenging. As a result, five possessor States have requested extensions of their destruction deadlines, in some cases, until the final deadline of 29 April 2012. This most important matter will be considered by the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention at its eleventh session in December of this year.

Our verification efforts related to the prevention of any future proliferation of chemical weapons are proceeding equally apace. Here, too, the inspection record of the OPCW speaks for itself. We have completed more than 1,200 industry inspections and aim at gradually increasing the quality and the quantity of our efforts in this area. I will say more on this point later.

Over 98 per cent of the world's chemical industry is located in States party to the Convention, and I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and applaud once more the support the world's chemical industry has shown for the object and purpose of the Convention.

Significant progress continues to be registered in the key area of national implementation of the CWC by all States party to it. It is quite encouraging to note that by now the vast majority of States parties have now established a National Authority as required under Article VII of the Convention.

At the same time, a considerable number of countries continues to lag behind in meeting all of their national implementation obligations. The OPCW continues to play its expected role in assisting its member States in their national implementation efforts. In the last three years, more than 130 States parties to the Convention have received support in this field from the Technical Secretariat and from several other States parties.

With regard to international cooperation and assistance, I am pleased to report that, since 1997, about 5,600 participants have benefited from more than 500 activities in the area of international cooperation in the peaceful uses of chemistry. Our programmes have been made possible, in part, by generous voluntary contributions from a number of States parties and from the European Union. We are, of course, grateful for this support.

Concerning budgetary matters, I am pleased to report that this year the OPCW is operating with zero nominal budgetary growth, which implies a diminution in the assessed contributions of member States. We hope and expect that we can achieve such diminution in the budget for 2007, which is still to be approved by member States and which contains a proposal to this end.

This budgetary discipline has been achieved without any detriment to full programme delivery. In fact, the year 2006 saw an increase in the level of OPCW activities in a number of areas. As Director-General, I will remain committed throughout the period of my mandate to fiscal discipline and to best managerial and administrative practices.

The overview I have just given will, I hope, provide a good sense of the progress in implementing the goals of the CWC. However, much remains to be accomplished, and the challenges are many. For

instance, it is clear that, notwithstanding this progress and the unwavering political commitment of all our State parties, in the coming years we will need to overcome significant operational hurdles in the disarmament area.

The Convention, which entered into force in 1997, sets the ambitious target of eliminating a massive stockpile of chemical weapons within ten years, with the possibility of an extension for an additional five years. The final deadline, therefore, is 29 April 2012, date by which each and every chemical weapon declared by States party to the Chemical Weapons Convention needs to be destroyed. Of course, we are still five-and-a-half years away from that date. And it would therefore be ill-advised and premature to jump to any conclusions. In fact, I remain absolutely convinced of the strong determination of possessor States to complete destruction by that date.

At this stage, therefore, I would simply underline that ensuring the attainment of this singular landmark is central to the success of the Convention, and is thus of the greatest interest to the whole of the international community. While requests for extensions of the April 2007 destruction deadline are fully in line with the CWC and deserve every sympathetic consideration by States parties, all possessor States parties must plan their final destruction activities in a manner that fully respects requirements under the Convention.

The full implementation of the CWC, in particular, Article VII, by all States parties, is another important challenge. Without exception, all of our States parties are under an obligation to both adopt and enforce the legislative and administrative measures required to detect, pursue, and prosecute any breach of the Convention in any area under their jurisdiction or control.

To a great degree, these obligations are essentially identical to those stipulated in Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

A further challenge facing the OPCW is the need for sustained and increased efforts in some categories of industry inspection. While we have been inspecting Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 facilities with sufficient frequency, I do not believe that we have done enough in relation to Schedule 3 plant sites and other chemical production facilities (OCPFs). Based on the declarations made by States parties, the Technical Secretariat has identified approximately 5,000 such production facility sites of relevance to the CWC.

It is true that, from a technical standpoint, these two categories of plant sites represent a less immediate problem with regard to the potential production of deadly chemicals. By the same token, however, some of them do produce or consume dual-use agents. That is why, under the Convention, they are declarable and, possibly, inspectable. Furthermore, the Convention does not say that they should necessarily be inspected less frequently than other categories of plant sites.

To date we have inspected only around eight per cent of all relevant facilities of that category. At the present rate, it will take us decades to inspect all of them at least once. This situation needs significant improvement. Furthermore, the need for action on such facilities is increased by the looming threat of chemical terrorism. On such basis, no lessening of attention in this regard could be expected from the Technical Secretariat. It is up to member States to take a political decision, if they so wish, in this respect.

Therefore, since becoming Director-General in 2002, I have consistently proposed through the OPCW budget, a larger number of OCPF inspections, and if my proposal for 2007 is approved, by the end of that year, we will have inspected approximately 11 per cent of all such production facilities. This verification activity will be done without any detriment to inspections elsewhere.

Universal adherence to the Convention is crucial to its success. Its object and purpose can be realized only if all States join in and fully implement its provisions. Indeed, even after completion of the destruction of all the declared stockpiles by all possessor States, the object and purpose of the Convention could be frustrated, if only a single State were to remain outside its jurisdiction. Technically, any such State could consider itself exempt from the ban on chemical weapons, hence preserving its ability to engage in forbidden chemical weapons programmes.

Although only fifteen Member States of the United Nations have yet to join, and some of them are taking steps to do so, there remains a small but significant number of countries whose continued non-adherence to the Convention is a matter of justified concern. Their reticence is often explained away as an unavoidable consequence of regional tensions or conflicts.

I do not agree at all with this line of thought, which seeks to legitimize a seemingly indefinite delay in joining the rest of humanity in banning forever an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. In fact, given the wide recognition of the CWC, chemical weapons are not only unacceptable today, but they are unmistakably illegal under international law. It is dangerous and unfair to the rest of the international community that a few States should seem to be able to remain free from the obligation to be transparent in this very sensitive area. In the end, there is, and can be, no moral or strategic justification for keeping the chemical weapons option open.

One worrying example of what appears to be firm reluctance to join the Chemical Weapons Convention is the case of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which only a few days ago detonated a nuclear device, thereby incurring the unanimous condemnation of the Security Council as set out in its resolution 1718 (2006).

I regret to say that — alone among all other nations in the Assembly — the authorities in Pyongyang have not acknowledged any of the many approaches we have made to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to encourage its membership in the OPCW. That negative fact is all the more disturbing given the long-standing international concern about the possible existence of chemical weapons in that State. In fact, in paragraph 7 of resolution 1718 (2006), the Security Council decided that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea "shall abandon all other existing weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programme[s] in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner".

In that context, I would like to reaffirm once more that the OPCW remains available and ready to assist the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to join the Convention.

Additional concerns exist about the persistent refusal to join the Chemical Weapons Convention by some key countries in the Middle East. I once again appeal to those countries to become parties to the Convention without any further delay. All avenues for dialogue are open. One such opportunity will be available in Rome next week at an OPCW workshop on the universality of the Convention in the Mediterranean Basin. There we will engage in further dialogue with States in the Middle East not parties to the Convention. The workshop is being organized with the support of the Italian Government and the European Union. We extend our sincere gratitude to both. In addition, I am grateful to the Foreign Ministers of Israel, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, each of whom has responded positively to my invitation to participate in the workshop and will be sending an official delegation. I also hope that we will be able to find other opportunities to continue our dialogue with Egypt, which did so much to bring about the satisfactory conclusion of the negotiations on the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The success of the Convention also depends upon a partnership among the groups of States that make up its membership. Articles X and XI of the Convention, which cover international cooperation and assistance and economic and technological development, represent areas of particular interest. The OPCW must continue and, if anything, increase assistance and support to States parties in that context. Of course, I must recall that the interest of countries in that particular aspect of the Convention stems not only from our commitment to promote peaceful uses of chemistry but also from their own needs to address the increasing legitimate demands for capacity-building so that they can respond effectively to chemical threats, including those posed by terrorists.

The OPCW is not an anti-terrorism agency. However, it is clear that the full implementation of the Convention can contribute to the struggle against the scourge, as can be seen from Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and, more recently, General Assembly resolution 60/288, which sets out the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

One other matter that is crucial to the success of the Convention is the ongoing strong commitment by all States parties to work by consensus. It is very reassuring to note that that practice has continued, thereby strengthening our hope that the challenge posed by our Second Review Conference, which is to be held in 2008, will, like the first review, be crowned by success.

An additional challenge is the political and operational need to ensure that all the verification tools provided for in the CWC work as they should. One such tool is the challenge inspection, which is crucial to the ability of the OPCW to maintain a credible deterrent against an attack involving chemical weapons

on any of its member States. The secretariat will therefore continue to ensure that it maintains the technical and overall operational readiness to carry out a challenge inspection, should it be required to do so in accordance with the CWC.

Additional operational challenges lie in the need to ensure that inspection procedures are efficient and cost-effective. Other issues are the result of developments in science and technology. Just as important are the emergence of new chemicals, the grey area between chemistry and biology and the production of new types of weapons. All those are matters that could have a concrete impact on the operation of the Convention.

Allow me to conclude by recalling that the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the CWC and of the establishment of the OPCW will take place on 29 April 2007. We trust that the Secretary-General will be able to join us on that occasion. Our States parties have every reason to commemorate with some satisfaction that important milestone in the history of disarmament. The CWC, and in particular its disarmament agenda, is being implemented effectively. We remain fully committed to the tasks entailed in achieving a world free of chemical weapons — a mandate that is promoted by the Charter of the United Nations and that serves the twin causes of peace and security.

As we approach our tenth anniversary, I would also like to express a final word of gratitude to all those States that intend to mark the occasion in a special way. Particular recognition is due to the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which is working in support of the CWC and the OPCW in an unparalleled fashion, and which is playing a crucial role in our commemoration next year. That is but another concrete demonstration of the Netherlands commitment to the success of the CWC and of the OPCW. In the same spirit, I would also like to express my thanks to the municipality of the city of The Hague, which is also supporting our commemoration and which spares no effort to make our lives comfortable in our home town.

The President: I call on the representative of the Russian Federation to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.4.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The establishment of the collective approaches necessary for the effective resolution of contemporary threats and challenges requires a steady increase in cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations based — as set out in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) — on the solid foundation of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular on Chapter VIII. As Russia's Foreign Minister, Mr. Sergey Lavrov, emphasized when he addressed the Security Council on 20 September (see S/PV.5529), the United Nations and regional organizations must harmoniously complement each other by utilizing their relative comparative advantages.

With regard to the United Nations, that means the universality of the membership and its activities and its universally recognized legitimacy. In turn, regional organizations possess the best knowledge of the situations in the areas in which they operate. They often also have more sophisticated equipment and their own sources of financing. A clear division of labour — while preserving the prerogatives of the United Nations and the Security Council — will make it possible to increase the international community's crisis prevention capability. We believe that the regular meetings between the Secretary-General and leaders of regional organizations are extremely valuable.

The agenda for cooperation between the United Nations and regional partners is becoming broader and more multifaceted. In addition to peacekeeping and peacebuilding, there is also a need to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, stem illegal sources of small arms and light weapons, control other destabilizing cross-border programmes, fight drug trafficking and organized crime and help to resolve multifaceted socio-economic problems in the world.

We must strengthen cooperation between the Organization and regional and subregional groups. Cooperation must be intensified with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern African Development Community and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, among others. The League of Arab States also has an important role to play in finding peaceful ways to resolve many of the problems affecting the Middle East region. Cooperation should also be strengthened with the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Organization of American States and other groupings in Latin America. We would also like to see further development of interaction with

the United Nations on the part of structures such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) when crisis response mechanisms are being set up.

Here too, it is essential to have full respect for the Security Council's primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, including the adoption of mandates for peacekeeping operations. The Russian Federation continues to promote deepened cooperation between the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Euro-Asian Economic Community, which make significant contributions to the resolution of today's problems and challenges at the regional and global levels.

We welcome the already solid links between those regional mechanisms and the United Nations, as well as the joint implementation of a number of projects and programmes. Integration processes in our region are maturing, becoming ever more active and involving States from neighbouring subregions. There has been a dynamic growth in the legal, institutional and financial basis of such cooperation.

Within the CIS, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Euro-Asian Economic Community, systematic and comprehensive interaction is taking place, including in such areas as peacebuilding, economic development and trade, environmental protection, humanitarian response, controlling migration flows and combating organized, cross-border crime and similar problems. Particular attention is being given to strengthening the potential of member countries, especially in the execution of major infrastructure projects, such as the construction of hydroelectric plants and the expansion and improvement of road and railway networks.

We note in particular the cooperation between the United Nations and the CIS in the area of peacekeeping. The Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the CIS, in close contact with United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNMIG), is maintaining security and stability in the Georgia-Abkhaz conflict area in near crisis conditions.

Significant prospects also exist for the evolving cooperation between the United Nations and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). In that framework, intensive work is under away to create a CSTO peacekeeping potential, including for deployment in United Nations peacekeeping operations. After the establishment of relations between the CSTO and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and between the CSTO and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, there is now a concrete possibility of cooperation in these areas.

A growing role in providing stability and security in the Euro-Asian region is played by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, whose members have said that they are in favour of developing cooperation with the United Nations in a number of crucial areas, including the fight against international terrorism, the illegal spread of drugs and the post-conflict recovery of Afghanistan. We welcome the dynamic process of strengthening cooperation between the Euro-Asian Economic Community and the United Nations, and we intend to continue to promote this.

At the same time, we believe that the potential for mutually advantageous cooperation between the United Nations and the integration mechanisms in the CIS area is far from being exhausted. In that context, we look forward to greater activity, more proactive approaches and increased openness to dialogue from the leadership of the United Nations agencies. Russia, for its part, is prepared to promote the further strengthening of those aspects.

A particular feature of my delegation's statement on this agenda item today is that this year the Russian Federation is not just the Chair of the Group of Eight (G-8), one of the major forums for agreeing upon and adopting collective decisions on problems of world development, but also Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC). Those international mechanisms are actively participating in building the new architecture of international relations. Although their areas of responsibility do not coincide, throughout our parallel chairmanships we have been conducting a kind of brainstorming process. We are trying to build a common understanding that narrow, bloc-based approaches to resolving problems of world development are not enough. Indeed, they are counterproductive and dangerous.

It is precisely in that spirit that we welcome this opportunity to analyse the level of cooperation between

the Council of Europe and the United Nations. We welcome the report prepared by the Secretary-General (A/61/256). We would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the senior officials from the Council of Europe and delegations from its Parliamentary Assembly who have made a special trip to New York to participate in the Assembly's discussion of this agenda item.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe is an example of long-standing positive relations between international organizations. The regular high-level meetings, the Council of Europe's increased contribution to major United Nations events and the unabated intensity of the Parliamentary Assembly's discussion of the question of cooperation with the United Nations are recent developments that have shown the great desire of the two organizations to have closer cooperation.

At the third Summit of the Council of Europe, which took place in Warsaw in 2005, member countries proclaimed their commitment to further strengthen cooperation between the Council of Europe and the United Nations. The purposes of the United Nations with respect to maintaining international peace and security, resolving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems and encouraging and developing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, are fully consonant with the purposes of the Council of Europe. At the regional level they are being achieved through efforts to embody universal values shared by States members of the Council of Europe, such as building a Europe without dividing lines on the basis of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, cultural diversity and social cohesion.

It is precisely in that spirit, and based on the provisions of the Action Plan of the Council of Europe, that the priorities were established for Russia's Chairmanship. Their practical implementation is being helped by the content of our programme, which we are trying to make as broad as possible, with as universally European a nature as possible.

The first of these priorities is strengthening national mechanisms for protecting human rights, developing human rights education and protecting the rights of national minorities. In order to guarantee human rights, the Council of Europe has long been closely cooperating with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on questions of asylum, refugees and stateless persons without citizenship, as well as with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Cooperation between the Council of Europe and the United Nations is developing in the area of preventing violence against women and protecting children.

A top priority for the Council of Europe is the establishment of a common European legal space to protect individuals from contemporary challenges. In this context, the Council of Europe has made a significant contribution to global counter-terrorism efforts under the leadership of the United Nations. Conventions have been adopted on the suppression and prevention of terrorism and on the suppression of the financing of terrorism, and work is under way to protect the victims of terrorist acts and cyberterrorism. The activities of the Council of Europe in combating incitement to terrorism and the recruitment and training of terrorists are fully consonant with Security Council resolution 1624 (2005). Close contacts have been established with the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the legal services of the relevant organizations.

The Council of Europe continues to work to improve democracy and civil society and to introduce effective methods of governance; a significant contribution to addressing these issues has been made by the regular high-level tripartite meetings between the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

Among the priorities for Russia's chairmanship of the Council of Europe is the promotion of tolerance and mutual understanding by developing dialogue and cooperation in the areas of culture, education, science, youth and sport. The Council of Europe is actively interacting with UNESCO, inter alia by creating an open platform for inter-organizational cooperation in the interests of intercultural dialogue.

During Russia's chairmanship, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe decided to support the Alliance of Civilizations initiative.

We believe that the development of cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe will help to achieve peace and security and to protect human rights, not only in Europe but throughout the world. The draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe, which we will shortly be submitting to the General Assembly for

consideration, fully promotes those goals. That document notes the contribution made by the Council of Europe in areas such as combating terrorism and crime and developing democracy and effective governance. It encourages interaction between the two organizations and appeals for the further development of such interaction. The adoption of the draft resolution would help to bring the United Nations and the Council of Europe closer and promote the more effective implementation of their goals.

In conclusion, I would like to call upon all States members of the Assembly to support and further strengthen cooperation between the two organizations.

I would like now to focus on cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC), of which Russia currently holds the chairmanship. During the 15 years of its existence, the BSEC has had a significant degree of success in attaining its basic goal: the effective promotion of trade and economic cooperation in the Black Sea area. The organization's authority has grown significantly, and its involvement in pan-European interaction is increasing.

In its capacity as Chair of the organization, Russia is seeking to do everything in its power to enhance its effectiveness and the practical results for member States. Our efforts are aimed at carrying out specific tasks in various areas, including transportation, communications, energy, tourism, environmental protection, emergency situations, counter-terrorism, organized crime and the prevention of outbreaks of dangerous infectious diseases. Important steps are also being taken with a view to actively involving regions and the local authorities of member countries in the BSEC. We are trying to make the organization more attractive for community businesses.

It is my honour to introduce, under sub-item (d) of agenda item 118, draft resolution A/61/L.4, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization", which all members of BSEC, as well as other interested States, have sponsored. The draft resolution seeks to further enhance the effectiveness of cooperation between the organization and the United Nations, as well as the international financial institutions. It reflects the significant progress made, as well as the momentum achieved, by the organization since the adoption of the previous resolution on the issue. Particular stress in the draft is placed on the priorities of the organization's work. The text will definitely give additional impetus to the development of cooperation between the two organizations, as well as revitalize the work done by the organization to further adapt it to new socio-economic realities.

I would like to sincerely thank all States members of the organization for the spirit of cooperation that they demonstrated in the context of the events held during our chairmanship, as well as to thank delegations that participated constructively in consultations on the text. We hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

The President: I call on the representative of India, who will introduce draft resolution A/61/L.5.

Mr. Anwar (India): India, which holds the presidency of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization this year, is happy to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.5 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization.

The Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO) celebrated its golden jubilee in April this year at its headquarters in New Delhi. Over the past 50 years, it has acquired unique stature in the context of promoting legal cooperation among Asian and African States. Its annual conferences are major events. Its New Delhi session in April this year was well attended. The exchange of views that took place on contemporary issues of international law proved highly beneficial to participants.

Reports of AALCO and the declarations adopted at its annual sessions have become an important source for the development of international law. AALCO has been identifying the common interests of Africa and Asia with regard to issues under consideration in the United Nations and other world bodies.

We would like to encourage AALCO to expand its activities. This could be done through special training programmes for promoting teaching and expertise in legal advising in the area of international law; establishing Chairs in international law teaching in universities; offering fellowships to Asian and African students for higher studies in international law; and publishing books devoted to international law that are of interest to Asia and Africa.

Some of these activities can be carried out, however, only if more funds are available. The clearance of arrears in contributions and the raising of funds through voluntary contributions would help. The shifting of the offices of AALCO and the residence of the organization's Secretary-General to their own new building would partially ease the financial situation.

Despite its financial limitations, the work of AALCO is efficiently organized by a small band of experts working under its very competent Secretary-General. Its excellent library and facilities deserve to be further improved. In due course, AALCO could operate as an international law documentation centre for the benefit of Asian and African States.

We are optimistic that in the years to come AALCO will achieve greater success in promoting the common interests of Asian and African States. We have no doubt that the cooperation between AALCO and the United Nations will continue to grow stronger. We wish AALCO every success in its future work.

The President: I call on the representative of Italy, who will introduce draft resolution A/61/L.6.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): I will focus on sub-item (k) of agenda item 108 on "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union". As the Assembly knows, a draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) comes up every two years in plenary meeting. As members will recall, the last one was adopted in October 2004. The resolutions that are adopted for each organization are, in general, consensus resolutions. This has always been the case for the IPU, and we firmly believe that it should continue to be so.

In its capacity as the current holder of the IPU presidency, Italy has taken the initiative of sponsoring this year's draft resolution for the debate in the General Assembly. We, together with a large group of other member States — whose numbers are growing by the minute — submitted draft resolution A/61/L.6. I am pleased to recall that the list of sponsors is still open for signature at the Secretariat desk in this Hall.

Each new draft resolution seeks — and in this it usually succeeds — to carry the United Nations-IPU partnership forward, as is proved by the growing cooperation between the two organizations over the years. This year's draft resolution is inspired by the decisions taken at the Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments, the 2005 World Summit Outcome, the report of the Secretary-General and the vision of the IPU President on building a strategic partnership between the United Nations and the IPU.

The operative paragraphs are based largely on the language used in the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). They are also inspired by the idea of further enhancing, within existing resources, the parliamentary dimension of the work of the United Nations as an important complement to its undisputed intergovernmental nature. The importance of enhancing the parliamentary dimension of United Nations activity must also be seen in the context of the current international situation, the role national parliaments play in the decision-making process of our Governments and the centrality they attribute to the role of the multilateral system and, within that, to the United Nations.

As an outcome of the consultations that we have recently been holding with a number of interested Member States, with a view of taking into account any possible concern, I would like to propose only a minor amendment to the seventh preambular paragraph . In particular, since the results of the wide consultation process undertaken by the IPU among national parliaments were not shared with the Member States through an official United Nations document, we propose to delete the last part, so that the paragraph ends with "the work of the United Nations". The seventh preambular paragraph would therefore read:

> "Taking note of the recommendations contained in the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations in regard to engaging parliamentarians more systematically in the work of the United Nations."

With this only minor revision, Italy is confident that this very important draft resolution can be adopted by consensus today.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Romania, who will introduce draft resolution A/61/L.7.

Mr. Motoc (Romania): I should first like to congratulate the Secretary-General for having presented us, as usual, a through report on cooperation

between the United Nations and regional organizations, an area of topical interest to Romania. I shall dwell a bit on the item dealing with cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC). In that regard, Romania is satisfied with the draft resolution on cooperation with the BSEC, which we have co-sponsored. I wish at the same time to congratulate the Russian Federation, the current chair of BSEC, for having successfully promoted the resolution. The Black Sea area is now a region with tremendous potential for multiple cooperation and economic development. That is why Romania believes it is only right and timely that the United Nations focus more on cooperation in the Black Sea Basin. The draft resolution we are preparing to adopt proceeds from such an expectation and is, therefore, highly welcome.

Still, we have to acknowledge that the full take-off of the Black Sea Region in political and economic terms is seriously hampered by lingering conflicts, which are slowly but steadily getting worse. These prolonged conflicts affect the lives and aspirations of millions of people, including those in the separatist regions within this area. I do not intend to dwell more on these conflicts and the multiple challenges they generate, as there are regional organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), that give closer consideration to these issues, and they will be taken up in the Assembly at greater length later in the year, but I would like to point out that the community of Black Sea States can do more to alleviate these problems. We have to get out of what now seems to be a vicious circle.

Improving economic conditions for the whole region will certainly create a better basis for dealing with security issues, but no exemplary economic cooperation can be sustained in the face of the pending political and security problems. We have to concentrate on what is really important for people around the Black Sea, for that matter, for people all over the world. There is an enabling, safe, stable and prosperous future for the countries in the region and their citizens. Economic opportunities are there, and they are huge, but if they are to be taken advantage of fully, it is high time to address more resolutely the security challenges in several areas of the Black Sea Basin. Human rights are a fundamental prerequisite and must be given full observance and respect in the process.

Romania considers that the wider Black Sea Region today should be regarded in a broader perspective. Opening up cooperation in the Black Sea Region is a necessity. Thanks in particular to the efforts made during the chairmanship of Greece, the European Union (EU) has acknowledged the importance of a safe and stable Black Sea region for European security.

I wish to welcome, in this respect, the platform of cooperation between BSEC and the European Union to be submitted to the European Commission to get the EU much more involved in the wider Black Sea region, and especially in projects of economic and democratic development. We need to raise the profile of our region on the United Nations agenda and other international organizations, which have the capacity and will to enhance our cooperation, and to contribute to strengthening the future of the BSEC. They are all confident that the relations we are building within the region can become a success story. That depends on us, as directly interested parties, but also on our friends worldwide.

(*spoke in French*)

Now, I should like to turn to the task of introducing the draft resolution. I am speaking as the representative of the host country of the last summit of heads of State and Government of la Francophonie. In that capacity, it is an honour for me to take the floor on behalf of the sponsors to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.7, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie". My task has every chance of being successful as it is being carried out under the General Assembly presidency of an individual whose connection with the French-speaking world is well known.

I would like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the quality of the report contained in document A/61/256, prepared under agenda item 108, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations". Section J of the report, relating to the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF), does justice to the wealth and intensity of the links established through time between this Organization and the organization of countries sharing the French language.

I would also like to pay tribute on this occasion to the Secretary-General of OIF, President Abdou Diouf,

for his dedication and his constant efforts to promote both the role of OIF and the development of its relations with the United Nations.

Mr. Majoor (Netherlands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The draft resolution has 10 preambular paragraphs, and 18 operative paragraphs. The preambular part recalls the principles on which cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF) is based. It also reflects the importance of regional cooperation in multilateral relations, the establishment and strengthening of democracy and the rule of law, access to new technology in the service of sustainable development, respect for cultural and linguistic diversity and dialogue between cultures and civilizations.

The operative part reflects the positive and constructive participation of the OIF in the work of the United Nations and cooperation between the two organizations in the area of conflict prevention and other areas of mutual interest, as well as the role played by the OIF in international conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations. The operative part also welcomes the work done at Bucharest at the eleventh Summit of la Francophonie on a subject of great relevance and pressing interest — namely, new technology in the service of education. It also refers to cooperation between the OIF and the United Nations, and between the OIF and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, with a view to achieving development and poverty eradication.

In conclusion, the International Organization of la Francophonie, to which as of last month no fewer than 68 States and Governments belong as members or observers, plans to make a greater contribution, within its mandate, to the work of the United Nations and to the lofty objectives of promoting peace, democracy, full respect for human rights and equitable development for all. These are some of the reasons why it is my pleasure to extend an invitation to United Nations Member States of the General Assembly, on behalf of the sponsors, to give their full support to draft resolution A/61/L.7.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine, who will speak on behalf of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (GUAM).

Mr. Khandogiy (Ukraine): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the GUAM countries: Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Over the past few years, cooperation between regional organizations and the United Nations has considerably expanded, strengthened and developed in a most constructive way. The GUAM countries firmly believe that the United Nations and regional organizations should complement one another harmoniously, using their comparative advantages.

We are confident that the activities of regional organizations can strengthen and reinforce a variety of critically important objectives of the United Nations, such as conflict resolution and the maintenance of peace and security, promoting democracy and human rights, countering terrorism and transnational crime and supporting economic development.

Allow me to touch upon issues of particular importance to the GUAM countries — cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC), and emerging cooperation between the United Nations and GUAM itself.

The Kyiv Declaration on establishing the GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, signed in May 2006, marked a new level in the GUAM integration process. By signing this Declaration, the Presidents of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova confirmed the desire of these States to promote democracy, stability and security, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, combating international terrorism, aggressive separatism, extremism and transnational organized crime, the deepening of European integration and the achievement of sustainable development and the well-being of their peoples, as well as resolving protracted conflicts.

The GUAM countries are of the view that peacekeeping is a very important part of the partnership of the United Nations with regional organizations, including the settlement of conflicts, post-conflict activities and peacebuilding. In this regard, we underline the need to enhance such cooperation in terms of finding solutions to the protracted conflicts in the territories of Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Azerbaijan; these have

evolved over the past 15 years. It is critically important that the international community, in particular the United Nations and the OSCE, continue to take practical steps to settle these conflicts, which are among the most serious obstacles to stability, democracy and economic prosperity in our region.

In this regard, the GUAM member States are grateful to those States that supported the inclusion in the agenda of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly of a new item entitled "Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development". It was an important step that will help us to focus the attention of the international community on the need for more effective steps in order to achieve progress in the settlement of conflicts on the territories of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova.

We call for the implementation of Security Council resolutions and decisions of the OSCE on the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, in Azerbaijan and Abkhazia, in Georgia, as well as the for realization by the Parties concerned of a plan for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in South Ossetia in Georgia, offered by the President of Georgia, and the initiative by the President of Ukraine on the Transdnistrian conflict in Moldova on a settlement through democracy.

The GUAM countries attach great importance to the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. With its vast geographical coverage, comprehensive approach to security, including the political, military, human, economic and environmental dimensions, and a unique toolbox of institutions, operations and mechanisms, the OSCE provides added value to the achievement of the goals of the United Nations.

Over the years, the OSCE and the United Nations have developed political and operational coherence in response to emerging threats to security and stability. The OSCE is committed to assisting in the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions in the area of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. Cooperation is ongoing in the fight against organized crime, illicit arms trade and human trafficking; synergies exist in the spheres of democratization, strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights. We also welcome the concrete practical outcome of cooperation between the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the OSCE Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities, which has taken the form of joint projects. We support further development of cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE in the areas of conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation, where the OSCE has accumulated unique experience and expertise through its specialized institutions and field presence.

Let me now turn to the subject of cooperation between the United Nations and BSEC. The GUAM countries welcome growing cooperation, both in quantity and quality, among the member States of BSEC. In recent years, we have witnessed an increase in and a greater positive contribution of BSEC activities to the strengthening of the economy, security and stability in the region. The BSEC continues to extend its efforts to strengthen regional cooperation in various fields, including energy, transport, trade and economic development, banking and finance, communications, environmental protection, among many others.

Since the issues of energy security are among the most important for Europe today, the Black Sea-Caspian region is of special significance for security and for the stable transportation of energy resources to Europe. The GUAM States are ready to take an active part in promoting energy projects within the framework of the BSEC. We are also convinced that the BSEC should provide effective support to the efforts of the world community aimed at combating terrorism, resolving the protracted conflicts in the region and combating transborder crime. It is necessary to coordinate BSEC activities with corresponding programmes supported by the United Nations, the OSCE, the European Union and NATO.

Better cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations is a work in progress. Today, we have significant practical experience to build upon. With the overall goal of enhancing international peace and security and ensuring real impact on the ground, GUAM and its member States remain committed to further improving cooperation with the United Nations and regional organizations in the future.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Papua New Guinea, who will speak on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea): I present this statement on behalf of the members of the Pacific Islands Forum group based in New York: Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, Papua New Guinea.

At the outset, I thank the Secretary-General for his report on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations (A/61/256 and Add.1). My intervention is focused on sub-item (r) of agenda item 108, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum".

The theme that the President of the General Assembly has chosen for the sixty-first session, "Implementing a global partnership for development", is a very appropriate one in the context of the deliberations on this agenda item. Our limited economic resource base and our remote location across the Pacific Ocean, coupled with a lack of technical expertise, of institutional and administrative capacity and of the financial resources needed to address the many multifaceted challenges in the economic, social, environmental and related fields, make it imperative that we collaborate with the United Nations system and other development partners.

The cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum has gained momentum in recent years. However, there is room to strengthen our relations and to build on the progress made so far. That is demonstrated by the increased interaction and collaboration among the United Nations Secretariat, the Pacific Islands Forum secretariat and other agencies of the Council of Regional Organizations in the Pacific, such as the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme, the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the Forum Fisheries Agency. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness forms the overarching umbrella for the United Nations strategy in the Pacific. We welcome the forthcoming United Nations strategy for the Pacific region and the United Nations development assistance framework.

In that connection, we encourage continued regular consultations between our Forum's secretariat and the United Nations, as well as United Nations participation in meetings of Pacific Islands Forum leaders, with a view to fostering closer partnerships through knowledge-sharing and cooperation on key strategic areas such as terrorism, international peace and security and trade.

It is our collective desire to strengthen those relations in our need for a partnership to address the ever-growing challenges before us, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015; to carry out our sustainable development agenda, including the full and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation; and to contribute positively to international peace and security, including by implementing the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and by addressing the challenges relating to small arms and light weapons.

At the forefront of the partnership between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum are the Organization's 14 development agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Environment Programme. We are indebted to those agencies for their commitment and service in responding to our development challenges on a daily basis.

Further examples of collaboration between the United Nations system and the Pacific Islands Forum are reflected in the Secretary-General's report. These include the successful mission in Bougainville, thanks to the United Nations Observer Mission in Bougainville and the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat; the development of joint proposals to complement the activities of the Government of the Solomon Islands and the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands; the vital role of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic; and the efforts of other United Nations agencies in undertaking important programmes and initiatives in our region.

Such programmes complement the activities enshrined in our Pacific Plan, which is the overarching

framework for collaboration and cooperation among the Pacific Islands Forum countries. The Pacific Plan is geared towards the security, good governance, economic growth and sustainable development of our region.

As equal members of the United Nations, the Pacific Islands Forum countries deserve a fair hearing from the United Nations system, which is reflected by an in-country United Nations presence and by the provision of quality support for our development efforts. Certain Pacific nations, such as the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, have a very minimal United Nations presence on the ground or none at all. That makes it difficult for those countries to receive the support needed to make progress towards the achievement of the MDGs and the fulfilment of other internationally agreed commitments and obligations.

Nevertheless, we are grateful for the Secretary-General's decision to establish a United Nations presence in those countries and to expand the Organization's in-country presence in Solomon Islands, through proactive engagement with UNDP and other agencies. We thank the Secretary-General for that important initiative and trust that the necessary formalities will be completed as soon as possible.

Our people must see activities on the ground that give practical effect to the Pacific leaders' vision of a region that is respected for the quality of its governance, the sustainable management of its resources and the full observance of democratic values, as well as for its defence of human rights. Our people must participate in activities and projects that provide them with economic, social and political security. To that end, it is important that the international community urgently address our communications and energy challenges and provide for alternative economic opportunities that will support and enhance the sustainable management of scarce resources.

The undertaking of concrete projects and programmes that address those concerns and improve the livelihood of the people is a litmus test for the validity of such partnerships. We must sustainably manage our resources, improve decision-making to achieve results and avoid creating unnecessarily cumbersome bureaucracies that have little impact in terms of delivering concrete projects in our island communities.

With a view to strengthening the ongoing collaboration between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum, we will present a draft resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum". We would very much appreciate the unanimous support of all delegations, expressed through the adoption of the draft resolution.

Mrs. Ferrari (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): It is an honour to speak, on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), in this debate on sub-item (e), "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community", of agenda item 108.

First, I would like to reiterate the appreciation of the Caribbean Community for the role played by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti during a difficult time for that country. CARICOM reiterates its call upon the United Nations and the international community to turn their attention to assisting Haiti in its development efforts.

CARICOM continues to utilize a variety of approaches for meaningful interaction with the specialized agencies and institutions of the United Nations to address the development needs of CARICOM member States. These institutional arrangements are characterized by considerable flexibility designed to enable the region to benefit maximally from the competences, capacities and comparative advantages of the United Nations system.

CARICOM member States continue to have access to the technical, training, advisory, operational and financial resources provided by various United Nations agencies to individual countries and subregional groupings, as well as the CARICOM secretariat and other CARICOM institutions with region-wide mandates and responsibilities.

The thematic conferences convened by the United Nations system, including special sessions of the General Assembly — for example, the United Nations Millennium Summit, the follow-up conference on financing for development and the special session on HIV/AIDS — have also been central forums for the discussion of critical development issues, the formulation of policy recommendations and the mobilization of resources. Those mechanisms

exemplify the coordination of effort needed to facilitate the convergence between the objectives, priorities and capacities of the international community and the critical development priorities identified by the Caribbean Community.

In keeping with the agreement reached between the representatives of CARICOM and the United Nations system when they met here in New York in April 2004, the region sought the support of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in a number of priority areas. The first was assistance to facilitate the implementation of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, in particular in the areas of infrastructure for a common capital market, the financial services sector and tourism; to develop national integration and public education programmes; and to strengthen CARICOM's legal systems and institutions.

The second priority area was the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, particularly in the context of the 10-year review conducted in Mauritius in January 2005 and its follow-up. Efforts to implement resolution 54/224, in particular to promote an integrated management approach to the Caribbean Sea in the context of sustainable development, constituted the third priority area.

The fourth area was increased cooperation on disaster reduction and management, including flood-hazard management, capacity-building, hazard mapping and vulnerability assessments. The fifth area was support for the implementation of the Action Plan of CARICOM's Regional Task Force on Crime and Security. The sixth area was a continued focus on HIV/AIDS, access to care and treatment and an integrated multisectoral approach to prevention; increased control of chronic non-communicable diseases; and the impact of social inequity on human and social development within and between countries.

The Community is pleased with the response by the relevant United Nations agencies to these critical areas in the region's development and counts on the continuing support of the United Nations.

The issue of crime and security is also of key importance to the Caribbean Community. The use of small arms and light weapons in illegal criminal activities throughout the Caribbean clearly proves the need for a concerted and sustained strategic programme over time to address the growing availability of illegal firearms.

In addition to this, the region has been plagued by the increase in the illegal cultivation, production, extraction, manufacturing and processing, as well as trade in and transhipment, of narcotic drugs. This, coupled with activities associated with money laundering, has the potential to undermine the economies of our countries. The initiatives of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), working in partnership with other regional and international bodies, have been critical for the region. Given the role played in the past by these agencies, the region believes that the closure of UNODC by end of this year will be detrimental. Our ministers have pleaded for its retention, and the CARICOM region hopes that those pleas will not fall on deaf ears and that the United Nations will review that plan.

As indicated in the report, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) continues to provide technical support to the countries of the Caribbean. CARICOM looks forward to the intensification of the work by ECLAC, in collaboration with the CARICOM secretariat, the Caribbean Development Bank and other regional agencies in analysing issues of relevance and importance to the economic and social development of the region, in supporting the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, in strengthening the region's statistical base, economic forecasting and modelling capabilities and in analysing macroeconomic, trade and sectoral policies.

The region intends to enhance its level of collaboration with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in 2007 and 2008. The CARICOM secretariat has approached that agency for support for its development agenda and is making the case for special and differential treatment for small economies in the context of the Doha development trade negotiations at the World Trade Organization, as well as in the areas of services, investment, and agriculture and non-agricultural issues.

The Caribbean Community continues to collaborate with UNESCO and UNICEF. In this regard, it is anticipated that those agencies will continue to

provide valuable support to the region, particularly through technical assistance to countries in the development and implementation of policies, standards and regulations and in the adoption of guidelines for a comprehensive policy, minimum standards and a regulatory framework for early childhood development services.

CARICOM looks forward to continued collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme, which has provided extensive support to the Caribbean region in addressing its environment and sustainable development goals and in the implementation of both the Barbados Plan of Action and the Mauritius international Strategy. In this regard, we wish to acknowledge the strengthening of the unit dealing with small island developing States in the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean through the provision of additional technical resources to assist the region, the consolidation of the Caribbean small island developing States programme and the provision of dedicated resources to facilitate its implementation in the region. We believe that that programme, which was recently endorsed by CARICOM ministers for the environment, can provide a framework which can be used as the basis for the development of a comprehensive environmental and sustainable development programme for Caribbean small island developing States. It can also provide a vehicle to begin to pool resources in a complementary and comprehensive manner.

Collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in the area of food security is ongoing through the Italian Government's contribution to the FAO Trust Fund for Food Security. Through this collaboration, the Community has been in a position to upgrade its Regional Food Security Programme, and to focus on the implementation of the Jagdeo Initiative with respect to the transformation of the region's agriculture sector. This has assisted each Member State in developing its own medium-term agricultural sector framework and in identifying bankable investment projects.

The FAO also spearheaded, in collaboration with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, the development of preventive measures against the avian flu, and a three-year project to that end has been established.

The Caribbean Community welcomes the close working relationship that has been established between the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the CARICOM-Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS in the implementation of regional projects financed by the World Bank. It is expected that this collaboration will continue in other areas related to health. The region also looks forward to developing similar strategic partnerships with the relevant agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme as it seeks to address the issues of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, obesity and hypertension, areas which CARICOM heads of Government have agreed should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

In conclusion, the Caribbean Community has benefited immensely over the years from meaningful cooperation and collaboration with United Nations system agencies. CARICOM looks forward to continued close collaboration with the United Nations and its specialized agencies in the promotion and implementation of the development efforts of our region.

The CARICOM secretariat and the United Nations Department of Political Affairs have been in consultations on arrangements for the proposed fourth general meeting between representatives of CARICOM and its associated institutions and the United Nations and its specialized agencies. The CARICOM secretariat looks forward to hosting this meeting early in 2007.

We will be introducing a draft resolution in the near future entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community", and we would look for support for it from all Member States of the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium, who will speak on behalf of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Mr. Verbeke (Belgium): Belgium, in its capacity as Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), highly values the cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE.

In January 2006, my Minister, Mr. Karel De Gucht, briefed the Security Council on the programme of action of the Belgian chairmanship. He reiterated

our commitment to close cooperation during his participation last September in the Security Council debate entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations and other intergovernmental bodies in maintaining international peace and security" (see S/PV.5529).

The secretariats of the two organizations had fruitful staff level meetings in May of this year and the OSCE participated actively in the seventh high-level meeting between the United Nations and the regional organizations. Several high-level representatives of the United Nations attended meetings and seminars organized by the OSCE, thereby showing the depth of contacts and cooperation between the two organizations.

On 16 March 2006, the Permanent Council of the OSCE formally adopted a declaration on cooperation with the United Nations. In this declaration, the OSCE affirmed its readiness to continue playing its role as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular, in the context of the framework for cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations as enhanced under the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit and Security Council resolution 1631 (2005). The Council further called on the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Chairman-in-Office and the Permanent Council, as appropriate, to take steps to further strengthen cooperation in this regard.

In order to further underpin this close cooperation, a General Assembly resolution on the relationship between the United Nations and the OSCE would be more than welcome. It was not possible, however, for the General Assembly to adopt such a resolution at its fifty-ninth session, nor at its sixtieth session. Belgium, as Chairman-in-Office, will continue to work towards such a resolution during the current session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan, who will be speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, as well as on behalf of the Economic Cooperation Organization.

Mr. Mammadov (Azerbaijan): Today, I have the honour to speak on behalf of two organizations, namely, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). I am currently the Chairman of both organizations.

In my capacity as the current Chairman of the OIC group at the United Nations, it is a great honour to address the General Assembly on the agenda item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference". I would like to convey the greetings of the Secretary General of the OIC and to wish the Assembly every success in its work at the sixty-first session. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to the President and to her colleagues in the Bureau for steering the work of the Assembly so successfully. We are confident that the session will be very ably directed under her leadership.

We have read with interest the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/61/256. It contains informative details pertaining to the ongoing cooperation between our two organizations during the period under review. I wish to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General for this important and valuable report and for his leadership role in enhancing cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations in areas of common concern. We would also like to commend the Secretariat for its part in the preparation of the report, which also includes contributions from other bodies of the United Nations system.

As in previous sessions, the Secretary-General's report is devoted to the status of implementation of programmes and activities in priority areas of cooperation jointly developed by our two organizations and their respective agencies and bodies during the period under review. As the report reflects, the progress of implementation is encouraging. On behalf of the general secretariat of the OIC and its specialized institutions, I would like to reassure the General Assembly that we remain dedicated to the joint tasks we are pursuing.

In my capacity as the current Chairman of the OIC Group at the United Nations, I would like to inform members that a draft resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference" has been distributed among the United Nations Membership. Next week, we will hold informal consultations on the text. Today, I would like to draw the attention of the

Assembly to two particularly significant operative paragraphs in the text.

First, the draft resolution highlights the efforts of the OIC Secretary General in strengthening the role of the organization in conflict prevention, confidence-building, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation in member States as well as in conflict situations involving Muslim communities. In that regard, we would like to affirm that the Secretary General of the OIC will continue to play an active role in these areas in our common search for solutions to these important global problems.

Secondly, our two organizations are requested to continue to maintain close and multifaceted cooperation in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding. In that regard, operative paragraph 2 of the OIC draft resolution encourages the United Nations system, its funds and programmes, and the specialized agencies to continue to expand their cooperation with the subsidiary organs and specialized and affiliated institutions of the OIC, particularly in the implementation of its 10-year Programme of Action.

The Ten-Year Programme of Action of the Organization of the Islamic Conference reviews the most prominent challenges facing the Muslim world today, such as combating terrorism, good governance, human rights, poverty alleviation in Africa and higher education, science and technology. The Programme of Action also includes ways and means of addressing these global issues objectively and realistically, in order to serve as a practicable and workable programme for all OIC member States.

In this regard, with the development of the Ten-Year Programme of Action, we look forward in the future to further strengthened, better coordinated and mutually cooperative interaction with the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system in their respective areas of interest.

I shall conclude my statement on the same note of hope and expectation, as I have done in past years, for future cooperation between our two organizations in all areas of common concern and in the best interests of our member States. We appreciate the fact that, in his report, the Secretary-General highlighted these aspects of the ongoing cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC. The levels of cooperation between the two bodies are thus duly described.

As the current Chairman of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Azerbaijan stands ready to deepen the existing levels of cooperation between the two organs on regional, as well as global matters of concern. We pledge to the General Assembly the full and continuous cooperation and support of Azerbaijan and the OIC.

Azerbaijan attaches great value to cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). Indeed, the ECO region has a vast potential and comparative advantages in a number of areas, such as human and natural resources and in scientific and industrial capacity, among others. The ECO is ready to engage in constructive dialogue with the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders on how to explore and utilize these resources.

Blessed with these advantages, we are committed to reinforcing our efforts to turn the ECO into a demand-driven organization, with tangible economic results that would benefit member States and the region as a whole. In our view, in order to realize untapped potential and achieve tangible results, we should pursue cooperation in such priority fields as transport, trade, energy, agriculture, tourism and information and communication technologies. I would like to call upon the international community to support the efforts of the ECO in this regard.

I would also like to inform the Assembly that Azerbaijan, in its capacity as Chairman of the ECO for the current year, is pleased to submit the agreed text of a draft resolution (A/61/L.8) on cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization, which we believe will be adopted by consensus.

In my national capacity, I would like to say that Azerbaijan attaches great importance to its cooperation with a number of regional organizations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This year, close cooperation continued between the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the OSCE. Joint conferences, seminars and other activities were organized and projects were implemented. It is important that such measures and projects be reflected in the report of the Secretary-General.

This year the preparation for an environmental operation to be conducted in the fire-affected occupied

territories of Azerbaijan can be pointed out as one of the important areas of cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE. In accordance with resolution 60/285, as an initial stage of the environmental operation, an assessment mission was conducted by a group of international experts, led by the OSCE, in the fire-affected territories of Azerbaijan in early October of this year. The objective of the mission was to assess the short- and long-term damage inflicted on those territories by the fires and to prepare recommendations for the forthcoming environmental operation. The close cooperation between the United Nations Environment Programme and the Economic and Environmental Subcommittee of the Permanent Council of the OSCE in the preparation of the assessment mission should be especially highlighted.

One important issue related to cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE is the fight against religious intolerance and discrimination. This is particularly critical in the light of anti-Islamic manifestations around the world. The OSCE approaches the issue of combating Islamophobia through the prism of negative manifestations of discrimination and intolerance against all religions. We believe that coordination and cooperation between the relevant bodies of the United Nations and the OSCE in this area should be strengthened.

The Council of Europe is another organization of which Azerbaijan is a member, and we also attach great importance to our cooperation with this organization. Considering the fact that conflict resolution is not within the mandate of the Council of Europe, cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe is limited to conflict prevention. In this regard, we propose that cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe in the area of conflict resolution be maintained in fields such as the protection of human rights, humanitarian, environmental and social issues, as well as early prevention and elimination of the negative consequences of conflicts.

In conclusion, let me assure the Assembly that Azerbaijan will do its best to enhance cooperation between the United Nations and the relevant regional organizations.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Guinea-Bissau, who will speak on behalf of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries.

Mr. Cabral (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in French*): The United Nations Charter, in particular its Chapter VIII, acknowledges the role of regional organizations. This role has grown to a level of importance never before equalled and is becoming even greater, given the regional nature of most conflicts. This confers upon regional organizations a responsibility that they must fully assume.

This is true, for example, of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The role of ECOWAS has frequently been commended by the international community, notably by the Security Council.

It is my honour today to speak on behalf of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP), over which my country has presided since last July. The CPLP is very pleased about the relationship that exists between the United Nations Secretariat and our organization. This cooperation has grown to include an ever-larger number of activities.

Since the CPLP obtained observer status, this cooperation has become stronger and has extended, inter alia, to the specialized agencies. In the context of ongoing training, for example, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has decided to hold seminars with a view to ensuring that young people, especially those coming from African countries such as ours, are familiarized with the workings of international trade and, in the interests of our respective countries, to better follow ongoing negotiations at the world level.

But that cooperation is not limited to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has also recently done similar things; in granting assistance mainly to Portuguese-speaking African countries, the FAO has decided to provide assistance so that we are in a better position and have better tools to manage the soil and land, for example, and to adopt land-use regimes that are consistent with our country's needs.

In addition, we recently had an opportunity with UNESCO, to commemorate Portuguese-language Day in the context of the struggle we are carrying out to ensure that multilingualism is a reality, in particular

within the United Nations system. The International Labour Organization is also helping us to combat the exploitation of young people — in particular children. Here, speaking on behalf of the countries I represent in this forum, I must emphasize how happy I am about the exemplary nature of our cooperation.

The role of regional organizations, as just noted, is of vital importance bearing in mind that conflicts are most often of a regional nature. As far as those of us within the CPLP are concerned, we also hope to make our contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

In short, all conflicts, whether localized within our countries or within our regions, call upon our attention in many ways. We have decided, therefore, to ensure that our cooperation with the Secretariat, among others, develops further. In that context, the Executive Secretary of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries has consistently sought to ensure that that cooperation is active and, if possible, exemplary.

Again, I wish to welcome the report of the Secretary-General. Its content emphasizes the importance of cooperation between the United Nations Secretariat, United Nations agencies and programmes and regional organizations and others. The statements we have heard this morning confirm our belief that it is necessary to see such cooperation develop further, in order to better respond to the aspirations of the peoples we represent and to address appropriately the enormous set of tasks that is the responsibility of the United Nations. However, we, the Member States, represent the United Nations and we are, therefore, the United Nations and share that responsibility. I can say that we are willing to share that responsibility and to assume it fully.

Once again, speaking on behalf of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, I must say how happy I am that our cooperation is so exemplary, and I wish to express the hope that our cooperation will grow ever stronger and extend to new areas that are even more useful to our respective countries.

Mr. Gross (Switzerland): Please let me first express my gratitude to the Government of Switzerland, which allowed me to speak in its place without having to speak in its name. I have the honour to address you as a Swiss member of parliament and a member of the Swiss delegation in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. I am proud to do this for the second time because, after quietly following the General Assembly's deliberations from the sidelines up in the gallery ten years ago, I then returned home to launch the idea of a citizens' initiative in favour of Switzerland joining the United Nations and thus correcting the negative vote on the matter we had 20 years ago. This political project, as you know, turned out to be successful in 2002.

As you know, the United Nations and the Council of Europe were born following the same catastrophic experiences and tried to draw the same lessons from them. They each joined the national forces to establish intergovernmental political bodies in order to prevent similar disasters from happening again. The Council of Europe's ten founding States — Turkey was one of them, Switzerland then again needed a little bit more time — followed the founders of the United Nations four years later. But they took from the beginning the common introductory reference to our respective founding charters more seriously. The Council of Europe translated the reference "We the Peoples" not only into a governmental body composed of ambassadors representing Governments — the so-called Committee of Ministers — but also a Parliamentary Assembly of members of the national parliaments, thus associating directly elected representatives of the peoples in the supranational political endeavours.

The political will of the pioneers of the European Integration process was at that time also strong enough to create the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg, where, since 1959, every citizen of a Council of Europe member State — today nearly 800 million people in soon to be 47 States — can submit complaints against the rulings of their highest national courts for violations of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The decisions of the Court have to be respected by the authorities of every State — the unique creation of a supranational authority accessible by hundreds of millions of people. It showed how courageous the European pioneers were at that time, and how far they were ready to go in order to overcome the atrocities committed by nation States not yet civilized by human rights and international law.

In the context of the 2005 summit of the Council of Europe, one of the foreign ministers described the

Parliamentary Assembly as "the true engine of the Council of Europe". The Prime Minister of Luxembourg showed in his report this spring that it was the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe that was, much more than others bodies, the true defender of the basic values, as well as more courageous and innovative than other bodies of the institution. Speaking about a report on the institutional balance of the Council of Europe, which was discussed just two weeks ago in our week-long autumn session in Strasbourg, our Austrian colleague, Peter Schieder, who is also present here today, noted that it is the first embodiment of the progress of the democratic spirit in international relations.

I would like to underline that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is not simply an annex to a primarily governmental organization that meets only a few days in a year, listens to officials and decides on resolutions. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is a genuinely transnational parliament that meets four times a year for a whole week and works between sessions in ten committees that meet about six times in addition to the sessional meetings and to whose resolutions and recommendations the Committee of Ministers is obliged to defer and respond. This has created not only more than 200 conventions — a genuine pan-European space with a common understanding of human rights, democracy and the rule of law — but also a genuinely transnational parliamentary discourse, exchange and learning process that is able not only to bring legitimacy to transnational law and policy-making but also to directly shape national legislation and governmental accountability.

You are certainly aware why I tried to show you the usefulness and the great merits of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the parliamentary assembly of an international organization that was created to represent the peoples. I would like to suggest further consideration of lessons we could learn from this successful pan-European experience, so as to introduce an elaborated and robust parliamentary dimension to the United Nations — a parliamentary dimension that goes beyond the respective bodies and other international organizations.

It would also be worthwhile to elaborate a parliamentary dimension that is integrated into the structures of the United Nations, interacts on the basis of specially designed procedures with the Secretary-General, the Security Council and the General Assembly, and which might provide a legitimacy only elected members of parliament may provide.

A parliamentary dimension that allows for the openness, frankness, critical thinking and straightforwardness which characterize parliamentary debates on global issues and concerns would be invaluable, and would produce greater innovation and creativity than other forms of debate. Such a dimension demonstrates what Pericles recognized 2,500 years ago, namely, that a tough debate is the most important precondition for making a wise decision.

Finally, the ideal deliberative body would also include a parliamentary dimension which would provide the basis for successfully countering the criticism that Governments and administrations prefer to work with non-governmental organizations and corporations, rather than democratically elected representatives at home.

There are many different ways to start a process to implement a parliamentary dimension within the United Nations. For example, on the basis of several meetings and existing reports, the United Nations could annually address transnational parliamentary bodies in various regions around the world, such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Doing so would stimulate the creation of such bodies as we know already exist in Latin America, Asia and Africa. Incidentally, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is already taking such steps with the Parliamentary Assembly and with members of parliament from our observer States. Japan, Mexico and Canada are participating regularly in these parliamentary screening efforts by the OECD.

The General Assembly could also agree to create a sister chamber composed of delegates — perhaps not directly elected among parliamentarians from all Member States since such a body would quickly become too large — from the transnational parliamentary bodies of the major regions of the world, for example, the parliamentary assemblies of the Council of Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia. The United Nations would then undertake proceedings to create duties and obligations for all its bodies to cooperate with a new United Nations parliamentary chamber.

I am of course aware that such changes require great political will, including the will of Governments

to share power with parliamentarians on the transnational level. If this will does not exist, the hegemony of Governments on the transnational level would continue to undermine the power of national democracy and national parliaments. Historically, this kind of will arose only after catastrophes and only in order to prevent new ones from emerging.

Today we cannot grant ourselves the dubious privilege of learning only in the context of catastrophes. For this reason, I wish us all the strength to learn and to reform power structures without the need to be pushed to do so by a new global catastrophe. While such an approach might be much more challenging and time-consuming, its great advantage would be that nearly all of us would be able to participate actively in a reform that is so much needed for the sake of this unique world and of humanity.

Mr. Abdalhaleem (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to welcome and thank the heads of the regional organizations who are in New York today.

First of all, I would like to refer to one passage from Chapter VIII of the Charter which was adopted by the founding fathers of this Organization, as follows:

> "Nothing in the present Charter precludes the existence of regional arrangements or agencies for dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action, provided that such arrangements or agencies and their activities are consistent with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations."

I would also like to recall the World Summit Outcome, which was adopted by heads of State or Government at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly held in this Hall in September 2005. That document reaffirmed the importance of multilateralism in confronting the challenges of our time. It also noted the increasing role played by regional organizations in terms of international peace and security, pursuant to Chapter VIII of the Charter, which requires the promotion of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations. Addressing issues of peace and security is a joint responsibility of the United Nations and regional organizations. Because of their direct links and their geographical proximity and cultural and social characteristics held in common with States that suffer from conflict, regional organizations have shown that they can find common ground and political agreement through dialogue. I would recall, for example, the experience acquired by the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States. Herein lies the importance of developing or reviving cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations pursuant to agreements that take into account the hierarchy of institutions and the complementarity and coordination of roles.

Among the most positive recent practices we have seen in the context of the reform process are the periodic meetings between the Secretary-General and regional organizations, an annual event held in parallel with the Security Council's meeting with representatives of regional organizations for the purpose of studying all aspects of cooperation, including cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations.

Within the context of the relationship among these various mechanisms and coordinating structures, the United Nations must now set its priorities, first among which is the promotion of the capacity of regional organizations and, particularly, the African organizations, in peacebuilding and peacekeeping.

We are not talking about regional organizations that have significant resources and capabilities at their disposal, such as NATO, the Organization of American States and the European Union. Rather, the African Union possesses young institutions, such as its Peace and Security Council, the development of whose capacities and resources should be a priority. Trust needs to be built among these various institutions so that they can play their proper regional role in building and keeping peace in Africa, a continent which suffers from many conflicts and civil wars.

The second priority of the United Nations in this context is the promotion of dialogue and coordination to avoid shortcomings, bridge gaps and address urgent matters. That requires urgent action, enormous resources, humanitarian intervention in some conflicts, and financial, technical and logistical support. The regional role should be complemented, not competed with. We support all of these practical relationships and, in keeping with Chapter VIII, Article 52, of the Charter, "The Security Council shall encourage the development of pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements".

Thirdly, financial support for training and exchange of expertise on the ground is very important; such activities should take into account the peacekeeping experience the United Nations has acquired. That support should build capacity in the areas of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, activities which need significant resources and capacity.

Fourthly, it is crucial to have special support for proactive monitoring and early warning systems for the prevention of conflicts or anything that endangers international peace and security within the specialized roles of regional organizations.

These organizations have to play a greater role in enshrining these principles of coexistence and collective security. The signing on 9 January 2006 of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army is proof of the peacebuilding capacity and effectiveness of regional organizations when they receive international support, particularly from the United Nations, donor nations and influential partners.

The signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement is further proof of the capacity of African States to build peace. Clearly, the party that achieved the Peace Agreement — and that supported it when it was just a dream — is in the best position to ensure its implementation, more so than any other party to the Agreement, particularly if it receives proper support within the context of international cooperation.

Mr. Mansour (Islamic Republic of Iran): After sixty-one years of invaluable experience in the United Nations system, many feel that regional arrangements play a crucial role in the harmonization of nations around the globe and in giving shape to the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the decisions of its entities. Therefore, cooperation between the United Nations system and regional organizations could lead to greater effectiveness and efficiency of those arrangements in achieving the goals they envisaged.

There is no doubt that any endeavour on the part of the United Nations to identify and remove barriers to cooperation will contribute to ensuring that this body will meet the challenges it faces. In that context, I would like to make several points concerning cooperation between the United Nations system and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), which was granted observer status to the United Nations in 1993.

The Economic Cooperation Organization, whose membership includes 10 countries in Central, Southern and Western Asia with a combined population of more than 400 million people, has indeed entered a new era and is flourishing, as it develops new initiatives and programmes in the economic, social and environmental fields.

The establishment of the ECO Trade and Development Bank, the entry into force of the Framework Agreement on Transit Transportation, the operationalization of the ECO Fund for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan and the reform in the internal structure of ECO are among the most important and recent developments in the organization. The signing of the ECO Trade Agreement by the member States and its enforcement hopefully by the end of December 2006 will, it is hoped, make the year 2006 a turning point in the history of the organization. The Ministerial Meeting of ECO, held on 26 September 2006 here in New York on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, placed emphasis on the significance of the cooperation between ECO and the United Nations system.

Fortunately, ECO member States have prepared themselves for such cooperation by making the decisions needed to strengthen relations between ECO and other regional and international organizations.

Recently, the Council of Ministers adopted the framework of the ECO Plan of Action for the enhancement of ECO external relations. In addition, the Department of Human Resources and Sustainable Development was recently established in the ECO Secretariat. That measure is another step to follow up on ECO-United Nations cooperation, particularly in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the region.

Implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Secretary-General contained in document A/61/256 is crucial for the achievement of ECO projects and programmes. In that document, the Secretary-General recommended that various specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system and relevant international financial institutions consolidate their efforts and extend technical and financial assistance

towards the implementation of ECO programmes and projects.

We firmly believe that consideration and adoption of the proposed draft resolution on cooperation between the Economic Cooperation Organization and the United Nations, during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, will be beneficial to the work of both organizations.

Mr. Awad (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of Egypt is honoured to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States", on behalf of the following countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The draft resolution we have just submitted on behalf of those Arab countries concerning cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States recognizes the need to increase and strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States and its specialized agencies, in order to obtain the objectives shared by both organizations. We commend the efforts made by the League of Arab States to strengthen multilateral cooperation among Arab countries, and we urge the United Nations to continue supporting those efforts.

The objective of the draft resolution, as requested by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, is to continue to work to strengthen cooperation between the two organizations in order to fulfil the purposes and principles stipulated in the United Nations Charter, as well to strengthen international peace and security, economic and social development and disarmament, and to put an end to colonization and to promote the right to self-determination and the elimination of all forms of racism and racial discrimination.

We would urge all United Nations specialized agencies and funds and programmes to strengthen cooperation and dialogue between the United Nations and the Arab League, in particular in the priority sectors, namely; energy, rural development, combating desertification, green belts, technical and professional training, the transfer of technology, the environment, the media, trade, finance, water resources, agricultural development, the advancement of women, transport, communications and information, strengthening the private sector and strengthening and building capacity. Lastly, the draft resolution calls for regular consultation between representatives of the secretariats of the two organizations to review and strengthen coordination mechanisms between the two organizations.

I shall now discuss Egypt's position concerning cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations. Since Egypt is an African, Arab and Islamic country, a founding member of the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference and a member of the International Organization of la Francophonie, we are convinced of the importance of regional interagency cooperation as the basis of multilateral international action. We therefore wish to stress the special importance of the Secretary-General's report on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations (A/1/256) in the context of rapid international developments. Such cooperation requires that we strengthen the concept of dialogue in order to prevent confrontation and war and to support peaceful coexistence at the political, economic and social levels.

In that regard, I should like to focus on a number of areas of cooperation between the United Nations and these organizations and groupings that serve as examples to guide us in attaining our objectives in various areas.

With regard to the economic and social aspects of such cooperation, it has become more urgent to strengthen mechanisms for regional and subregional dialogue and cooperation to address the great demographic growth that is now imposing a heavy burden on natural resources and their sustainability, compared with what the world was like at the time when this Organization was founded. We will not be able to achieve security or stability unless there is socio-economic development in Africa and on all other continents.

We are following very closely the tireless efforts by United Nations programmes and funds throughout the world, particularly in Africa. However, we wish to recall that the African continent is the only region of the world that will not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals on time. That is why we would like the Secretary-General to submit practical proposals

aimed at strengthening inter-agency cooperation between United Nations bodies and those of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) during the present General Assembly session and next year's. We expect the Assembly to honour the commitment undertaken at the 2005 World Summit to support NEPAD and not hold back the financing of that task when the Organization's programme budget is adopted, so that commitments undertaken in other forums can be implemented.

At the political level, with regard to strengthening the concept of collective security from a regional perspective, the African continent is in urgent need of capacity-building in the area of peacekeeping. We hope that the Secretary-General will submit a comprehensive study on the 10-year programme adopted at the 2005 Summit to build Africa's peacekeeping capacity. That is essential not only to restore stability, but also to strengthen African ownership of the process of conflict management and settlement. In addition, the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Fund, the United Nations Democracy Fund and the Central Emergency Response Fund will help to promote democratic change and economic and social development in Africa. We therefore look forward to cooperation and complementarity between all those mechanisms and the relevant African institutions, including the African Union, NEPAD and the Economic Commission for Africa.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States is key to the strengthening of dialogue and cooperation in a vital area stretching from the Arab Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean, through 22 Arab States. Those States are within the mandate of two regional United Nations commissions — the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, and the Economic Commission for Africa. In addition to the political cooperation between those two bodies, which dates back to their establishment, those efforts include managing the conflicts in the Middle East, including the Arab-Israeli conflict, and addressing the situations in the Sudan, Iraq and the Horn of Africa. Cooperation also includes information technology, empowerment of women, the fight against HIV/AIDS, and other development areas referred to in the Secretary-General's report.

We emphasize the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and the Arab League with a view to strengthening dialogue and contacts in various areas of common interest, particularly Arab-African, Arab-Latin American and Arab-Chinese cooperation and other transregional cooperation frameworks that strengthen contacts among States, peoples and cultures.

There are now more than 1.2 billion Muslims throughout the world. They are brought together under the umbrella of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which has become a main framework for cooperation. Those relations are strengthened through the United Nations at a time when the tone of militancy in the dialogue among cultures and religions is intensifying. The OIC seeks to strengthen the settlement of differences and explain different conceptions and visions in order to bring people together in tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Joint efforts must be undertaken to address the great apprehension of Muslims in the East and the West with regard to religious discrimination. The OIC is playing a major role in that regard, which, together with its role of promoting peace, will enable it to serve as an institutional donor to the Peacebuilding Commission. The OIC is also playing an important role in South-South cooperation within the United Nations.

Among the member States of the Internationai Organization of la Francophonie, Egypt is one of the largest troop contributors to United Nations peacekeeping operations. We would like to see greater cooperation in that regard in relation to conflict prevention and peaceful dispute settlement, which is a common denominator of United Nations action.

The delegation of Egypt was a sponsor of the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (A/61/L.6), which was introduced a short while ago by the representative of Italy. Cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU has become a tangible element enshrined in General Assembly resolutions and in action carried out in accordance with a programme established at the level of the parliaments of member States to bring views closer together and to clarify different conceptions. Hope was expressed at the 2005 World Summit that such cooperation could be strengthened. That hope was echoed recently in resolution 60/286, on revitalization of the General Assembly.

Strengthening the dialogue between the General Assembly and the IPU in political affairs will have a positive impact with regard to the situation in the Middle East, Iraq, the Sudan and Afghanistan. It will support the Organization's efforts to reach a political settlement to those problems, which are destroying lives and property

at a time when the world's peoples aspire to freedom, justice and development in accordance with their own vision and their free will.

We also welcome dialogue between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and United Nations bodies such as the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission and other international forums, including the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

Lastly, we would like to express our hope that the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General will contain practical and enforceable proposals on cooperation between the United Nations and all regional and other organizations and that the proposals in the report will not be limited to the Inter-Parliamentary Union only. Such cooperation should be strengthened through annual dialogue between the General Assembly and heads of the regional organizations and their secretariats. This will help to enrich cooperation in all its aspects.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): As globalization grows ever more deeply rooted, our world is getting smaller and smaller, with more and more problems that call for concerted action by all countries. As the most representative international organization, the United Nations is now facing a greater need to strengthen its cooperation with regional and other international organizations to promote world peace and security and the common development of humankind. For this reason, the Chinese delegation welcomes the General Assembly's deliberations on this important agenda item, "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations".

Allow me to comment, in particular, on the cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO). AALCO is the only intergovernmental legal consultative organization in the Asian and African region. Here, we cannot fail to recall the famous Bandung Conference, held some 50 years ago: AALCO represents one of its most significant achievements. Over the years, the spirit of unity, friendship and cooperation advocated by the Bandung Conference has been a source of inspiration for Asian and African countries.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of AALCO. At its forty-fifth annual session last April, member States gathered together to celebrate the occasion. Several months have elapsed, but the fond memory lingers. As a regional organization operating in the legal field, AALCO has been carrying forward the Bandung spirit over the past 50 years in providing a forum for exchanges and cooperation on international legal matters among Asian and African countries and assisting them in engaging in international legal practices, while promoting, through its activities, the progressive development and codification of international law.

Over the years, AALCO has been following the work of the Sixth Committee and the International Law Commission. Many important international legal issues have been the subject of focused discussions in the organization, including the work of the International Law Commission, the Law of the Sea, international cooperation in combating trafficking in women and children, international legal instruments in the anticorruption field, measures to eliminate international terrorism, and the World Trade Organization's framework agreements as a code of conduct for world trade. The comments or proposals by AALCO on these questions have served as an important reference for Asian and African countries participating in related General Assembly deliberations, and even for the work of other legal organs of the United Nations.

In today's world, Asian and African countries have made significant progress in political, economic and social areas, concurrent with a marked elevation of their standing and role in international affairs. They have become an important force for world peace and common development. Accordingly, Asian and African countries will continuously broaden their participation in international legal affairs and take a more effective part in the process of democratization and rule of law governing international relations. As a legal consultative organization of Asian and African countries, AALCO is poised to play a more active role in this regard.

As a member State of both the United Nations and AALCO, China attaches great importance to the AALCO and is most supportive of its work. I wish hereby to reaffirm that the Chinese Government will, as always, continue to contribute to the close cooperation between AALCO and the United Nations and other related organizations.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.